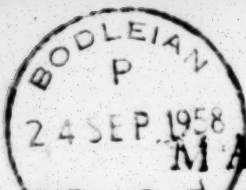


A
SERMON
OF THE
Unpardonable Sin
AGAINST THE
HOLY GHOST.

By JOHN TILLOTSON, D.D.



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MATTH. XII. 31, 32.

Therefore I say unto you, all manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men, but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto Men :

And whosoever speaketh a Word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him : But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this World, neither in the World to come.

THE Occasion of these Words of our Blessed Saviour was the Blasphemy of the Pharisees against that Divine Power by which he wrought his Miracles, and particularly did cast out Devils. Which Works of his, tho' they were wrought by the Spirit of God, yet they obstinately and maliciously imputed them to the Power of the Devil. Upon which our Saviour takes Occasion to declare the Danger of the Sin, which He calls *Blaspheming of the Holy Ghost* ; and tells them, that this was so great a Sin above all other, that it is in a peculiar manner unpardonable. *Therefore I say unto you, &c.*

For the explaining of these Words, and the Nature and Unpardonableness of this Sin, we will enquire into these four things :

First, What is the Difference between speaking against the Son of Man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost.

Secondly,

Secondly, Wherein the Nature of this Sin or Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost doth consist.

Thirdly, In what Sense this Sin is here said to be peculiarly unpardonable. And,

Fourthly, Upon what Account it is so.

1. What is the Difference between *Speaking against the Son of Man*, and *speaking against the Holy Ghost*. The Reason of this Enquiry is, because the Text plainly puts a great difference between them, tho' it be not obvious to discern where it lies. For our Saviour tells us that *whosoever speaks a Word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall never be forgiven him*: And yet this Blasphemy of the *Pharisees* against the Holy Ghost was speaking against the Son of Man. For to say he cast out Devils by the Power of the Devil, tho' it was a blaspheming of the Holy Ghost by whose Power he wrought these Miracles, yet it was likewise blaspheming of Christ himself, and was in effect to say that he was no true Prophet, nor did come from God, but was a Magician and Impostor.

For the removing of this Difficulty I shall not need to say, as some learned Men have done, That by *the Son of Man* is here to be understood any Man, and that our Saviour is not particularly designed by it. That seems very hard, when our Saviour is so frequently in the Gospel called the *Son of Man*. And especially

especially when St. *Luke* reciting these Words, does immediately before give him this very Title to put the Matter out of all doubt, *Luke 12. 8, 9, 10. Also I say unto you, whosoever shall confess me before Men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the Angels of God.* Upon which it follows, *And whosoever shall speak a Word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him.* So that in all reason the Son of Man is the very same Person that had this Title given him in the foregoing Words, viz. our Blessed Saviour. So that I take it for granted, that by speaking against the Son of Man is here meant speaking against Christ: And by speaking against him, as it is opposed to speaking against the Holy Ghost, is meant all those Reproaches and Contumelies which they cast upon our Saviour's Person, without reflecting upon that Divine Power which he testified by his Miracles. As their reproaching him with the Meanness of his Birth, *Is not this the Carpenter's Son?* With the Place of it (as they supposed) *out of Galilee ariseth no Prophet:* Their reflecting upon his Life, saying, that he was a *Wine-Bibber* and a *Glutton*, a *Friend of Publicans and Sinners:* With many other Calumnies which they maliciously cast upon him.

But by speaking against the Holy Ghost is meant their blaspheming and reproaching that Divine Power whereby he wrought his

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his Miracles ; which though it did at last likewise reflect upon our Saviour's Person, yet it was an immediate Reflection upon the Holy Ghost, and a blaspheming of him ; and therefore it is called speaking against the Holy Ghost, by way of Distinction or Opposition to the other Calumnies which they used against our Saviour ; which were proper Blasphemies and Reproaches of his Person, but not of the Holy Ghost also, as this was. This seems to be the true Difference here intended by our Saviour between *speaking against the Son of Man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost*. Let us in the

II. Second place, enquire wherein the Nature of this Sin or Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost doth consist. And the true nature of this Sin, though it be so plainly to be gathered from our Saviour's Description of it, yet I know not how a great many learned Men have made a hard shift to mistake it. Some have made it to be *final Impenitency*, because this is unpardonable. But why that rather than any thing else that is bad should be called a blaspheming of the Holy Ghost, it is hard to give a Reason. Others have placed the nature of it in a *wilful and obstinate Opposition of the Truth* : Which though it be a great Sin, and included in the Sin here spoken of, or a Concomitant of it ; yet is there great Reason to believe that this is not all that is here meant by it.

Others would have it to consist in a malicious Opposition of the Truth, *when Men know and are convinced that it is the Truth*; which is a great Sin indeed, if ever any Man were guilty of it. A Man may indeed have sufficient Means of Conviction, and yet not be convinc'd; but it is hardly imaginable that a Man should oppose the Truth when he is actually convinc'd that it is the Truth. And to mention no more, others think it to consist in a renouncing of the Truth for *fear of Suffering*; which made *Francis Spira* to think he had committed this Sin.

But with all due Respect to the Judgment of others, I cannot think that any of these is the Sin our Saviour here describes. As I shall endeavour plainly to shew, by considering the Occasion of our Saviour's mentioning of it, the Persons upon whom our Saviour chargeth this Sin, and upon what Account he chargeth them with it.

At the 22 ver. of this Chapter there was brought to our Saviour *one possessed with a Devil, blind and dumb, and he healed him. Upon this the People were amaz'd, and said. Is not this the Son of David?* that is, the *Messias*. The Pharisees hearing this, with great Bitterness and Contempt said, *This Fellow doth not cast out Devils but by Bee'zebub the Prince of Devils*. Upon this our Saviour represents to them the Unreasonableness of this Calumny; and

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and that upon these two Considerations :
 1st, That it was very unlikely that the Devil
 should lend him this Power to use it against
 himself. *Every Kingdom divided against it self*
is brought to Desolation : and every City or House
divided against it self shall not stand. And if Sa-
tan cast out Satan, he is divided against him-
self, how then shall his Kingdom stand ?
 2^{dly}. Our Saviour tells them, they might
 with as much reason attribute all Miracles to
 the Devil. There were those among them-
 selves who cast out Devils in the Name of the
 God of *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* (as *Origen,*
Tertullian, and *Justin Martyr* tell us.) Of
 these our Saviour speaks, and asks the Pha-
 risees by *what Power they cast them out.* But
 they acknowledged these did it by the Power
 of God, and there was no Cause but their
 Malice why they should not have acknow-
 ledged that he did it likewise by the same
 Power, *ver. 27. If I by Beelzebub cast out De-*
vils, by whom do your Children cast them out ?
therefore they shall be your Judges ; that is, this
 may be sufficient to convince you of Malice to
 me : But if I cast out Devils by the Spirit of
 God, then the Kingdom of God is come unto
 you, that is, the *Messias* is come ; because he
 wrought these and other Miracles to prove
 that he was the *Messias*. And then it follows,
Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of Sin and
Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men, but the
Blasphemy

Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto Men.

So that the *Pharisees* are the Persons charged with this Sin or Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. And their Blasphemy was plainly this, that when he cast our Devils by the Spirit of God, they said he did it by the Power of the Devil; they maliciously ascribed these Works of the Holy Ghost to the Devil.

And that this is the Ground why our Saviour chargeth them with this Sin against the Holy Ghost is yet more plain from *St. Mark*, *Mark 3. 28, 29, 30. Verily I say unto you, all Sins shall be forgiven unto the Sons of Men, and Blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in Danger of Eternal Damnation; because they said he hath an unclean Spirit.* That is, because the *Pharisees* charged him to be a Magician and to have a familiar Spirit, by whose assistance he did those Works, when in truth he did them by the Spirit of God, therefore our Saviour declares them guilty of this Sin of Blaspheming the Holy Ghost, which should never be forgiven.

So that the Nature of this Sin did consist in a most malicious Opposition to the utmost Evidence that could be given to the Truth of any Religion. Our blessed Saviour to shew that he was sent by God, and came from him wrought Miracles, such as did plainly evidence

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a Divine Power and Presence accompanying him. For in *St. Luke* he is said to do them by the *Finger of God*, *Luke 11. 20.* By the *Finger of God*, that is, to do such things as were undeniable Evidence of the Divine Power and Presence. And this is the utmost Testimony that God ever gave to any Person that was sent by him. And the *Pharisees* were Eye-Witnesses of those Miracles which our Saviour wrought, so that they could not deny them: Yet such was their Opposition to him and his Doctrine, that though they saw these things done by him, and could not deny the reality of them, yet rather than they would own him to be the *Messias*, and his Doctrine to come from God, they most maliciously and unreasonably ascribed them to the Power of the Devil. And this was the Blasphemy which they were guilty of against the Holy Ghost. And herein lay the greatness of their Sin, in resisting the Evidence of those Miracles which were so plainly wrought by the Holy Ghost; and which though themselves saw, yet they maliciously imputed them to the Devil, rather than they would be convinced by them. And this is so very plain, that hardly any Man that considers our Saviour's Discourse upon this Occasion can otherwise determine the Nature of this Sin, if he do but attend to those remarkable Words cited before, (*Mark 3. 29.*) *But he that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost hath never Forgiveness, but*

but is in Danger of Eternal Damnation ; because they said he hath an unclean Spirit. I come now to the

III. *Third thing I propounded, namely, in what Sense this Sin is here said to be peculiarly unpardonable ? For this Sin our Saviour positively affirms to be in this different from all other Sins, that it is capable of no Pardon : I say unto you, all manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men ; but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto Men : And to shew what he means by the not forgiving of it, he tells us, that Eternal Punishment shall follow it in the other World. Whosoever speaketh a Word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him, neither in this World, nor in the World to come. Which St. Mark expresth more plainly, that it shall bring those who are guilty of it to Eternal Damnation, Mark 3. 29. He that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost hath never Forgiveness, but is liable to Eternal Damnation. So that when our Saviour says, it shall never be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the World to come, he does not intend to insinuate that some Sins which are not forgiven in this World may be forgiven in the other ; but in these Words he either alludes to the Opinion of the Jews concerning the Effect of the highest Excommunication,*
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the Sentence whereof they held not to be reversible neither in this World nor the other; or else the Reason of this Expression may probably be to meet with a common and false Opinion among the *Jews*, which was that some Sins which are not pardoned to Men in this Life may by Sacrifices be expiated in the other; and therefore he says it shall never be forgiven, neither in this World, nor the other. And *St. Mark* more plainly, that those who are guilty of it shall *never have forgiveness*, but *be liable to Eternal Damnation*. So that our Saviour's Meaning seems plainly to be this, that this Sin is altogether incapable of Forgiveness. I know some have endeavoured to mollifie this matter, but (I think) without sufficient Reason. *Grotius* understands the Words *comparatively*, that any sort of Sin shall sooner be forgiven than this against the Holy Ghost; and that our Saviour only intended to express the Greatness and Heinousness of this Sin above others, in which respect the Pardon of it would be more difficult than of any other Sin; but yet that the Case of such a Person is not absolutely desperate: But if our Saviour had intended to say that this Sin was absolutely unpardonable, I would fain know how could he have expressed the Matter in higher and fuller Words? *Dr. Hammond* mollifies the Words another way, that this Sin shall never be pardoned

doned but upon a *particular Repentance* for it :
 As if our Saviour's Meaning was that a general
 Repentance, which was sufficient for Sins
 of Ignorance, would not be sufficient in this
 Case, but there must be a *particular Repentance*
 for it, without which it would never be par-
 doned. But this is by no means agreeable to the
 Scope of our Saviour's Discourse : Because he
 plainly intends to difference this from all other
 Sorts of Sins, I say unto you, *all manner of Sin*
and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men. But
 according to this Interpretation our Saviour
 must mean that all other Sins would be forgiven
 upon a general Repentance : which is not
 true, for there are many other Sins besides Sins
 of Ignorance, there are wilful and heinous Sins,
 such as wilful Murder, Adultery, and Blasphemy,
 (that only excepted which is against the
Holy Ghost) and the like gross Sins, which
 all Divines hold shall not be forgiven but upon
 a *particular Repentance*. So that this Interpretation
 does not sufficiently difference this Sin
 from all other sorts of Sins, which is yet very
 plain our Saviour intended to do. It remains
 then that these Words must in all reason be
 understood absolutely, that the Persons that
 are guilty of this great Sin shall never have
 it forgiven unto them. And it may be this will
 not seem so harsh when we have considered in the

IV. Fourth place, how it comes to pass
 that this Sin is above all others incapable

of

of Pardon ; and that, upon these two Accounts.

First, Because by this Sin Men resist their last Remedy, and oppose the best and utmost Means of their Conviction. What can God be imagined to do more to convince a Man of a Divine Revelation, or of the Truth of any Doctrine or Message that comes from him than to work Miracles to this purpose? And what greater Assurance can Men have they are wrought, than to be Eye-Witnesses of them themselves? And if Men will resist such Evidence, what can God do more for their Satisfaction? If when Men see plain Miracles wrought they will say that it is not the power of God that does them, but the Power of the Devil: And if when Men see the Devils cast out, they will say that the Devil conspires against himself, this is to outface the Sun at Noon-Day, and there is no way left to convince such perverse Persons of the Truth of any Divine Revelation. So that there is no Remedy but such Persons must continue in their Opposition to the Truth. For this is such a Sin as does in its own Nature shut out and prevent all Remedy. And he that thus perversely and maliciously opposeth the Truth, must upon the same Grounds unavoidably continue in his Opposition to it; because there is nothing left to be done for his Conviction, more than is already done.

If God should send a Person immediately from Heaven to him to convince him of his Error, he can give him no greater Testimony that he comes from God than Miracles : And if when God enables that Person to work these by the Power of his Spirit, this Man will obstinately impute them to the Power of the Devil, he defeats all the imaginable Means of his own Conviction. So that it is no wonder if that Sin be unpardonable, which resists the last and utmost Means which God hath ever yet thought fit to use to bring Men to Repentance and Salvation. And if God were willing to reveal himself and the way to Pardon and Salvation to such a one, he doth by this very Temper and Disposition render himself incapable of being satisfied and convinced concerning any Divine Revelation.

Secondly, Because this Sin is of that high Nature that God is thereby justly provoked to withdraw his Grace from such Persons; and it is probable, resolved so to do; without which Grace they will continue impenitent. There is no doubt but God, if he will, can work so powerfully upon the Minds of Men by his Grace and Spirit, as to convince the most obstinate : And supposing them to be convinced and repent, it cannot be denied but that they would be forgiven. And therefore when our Saviour here says they shall not be forgiven, it is reasonable to suppose that

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that he means that when Persons are come
 to that Degree of Obstinacy and Malice, God
 will (as he justly may) withdraw his Grace
 from them : *His Spirit will not strive with*
them to overcome their Obstinacy, but will
 leave them to the Byasse of their own perverse
 and malicious Minds; which will still engage
 them in a further Opposition to the Truth,
 and finally sink them into Perdition. So that
 being deserted by God, and for want of the
 necessary Help and Aid of his Grace (justly
 withdrawn from them) continuing finally
 impenitent, they become incapable of For-
 giveness both in this World, and that which
 is to come. And there is nothing that can
 seem harsh or unreasonable in this, to those
 who grant (as I think all Men do) that God
 may be so provoked by Men as justly to with-
 draw his Grace from them in this Life, that
 Grace which is necessary to their Repentance.
 And surely if any Provocation be likely to
 do it, this cannot be denied to be of all
 others the greatest, obstinately and maliciously
 to oppose the utmost Evidence that God ever
 gave to the Truth of any Doctrine revealed
 by Him. And of this the *Pharisees*, who are
 here charged with this Sin against the Holy
 Ghost, were notoriously guilty in resisting
 the clear Evidence of our Saviour's Miracles.
 And thus I have done with the *four things*
 I propounded to enquire into from these
 Words,

Words, *namely*, The Difference between speaking against the Son of Man, and speaking against the Holy Ghost; wherein the Nature of this Sin or Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost does consist; and in what Sense this Sin is said to be unpardonable; and upon what Account it is so, *namely*, because Men by this Sin resist their last Remedy, and oppose the best and utmost Means of their Conversion: And because it may reasonably be supposed that upon a Provocation of this high Nature, God may and is resolved to withdraw that Grace from such Persons which is necessary to their Repentance, without which their Sin remains for ever unpardonable.

All that now remains is to make this Discourse some way or other useful to ourselves. And it may very well serve to these two Purposes.

First, To comfort some very good and pious Persons who are liable to despair out of an Apprehension that they have committed *this Sin*.

Secondly, To caution others against the Approaches of it.

1. *First*, To comfort some very good and pious Persons, who are liable to despair upon an Apprehension that they have committed *this great and unpardonable Sin*; and consequently are utterly incapable of ever being restored to the Mercy and Favour of GOD.

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And nothing can be more for the Comfort of such Persons than to understand aright what the Nature of this Sin was, and wherein the Heinousness of it doth consist; which I have endeavoured to manifest. And if this be the Nature of it which I have declared, as it seems very plain that it is, then I cannot see how any Person Now is likely to be in those Circumstances as to be capable of committing it. And being a Sin of so heinous a Nature, and declared by our Saviour to be absolutely unpardonable, there is no Reason to extend it beyond the Case to which our Saviour applies it; which was the resisting of the Evidence of the Miracles which were wrought by the Truth of Christianity, by those who were Eye-Witnesses of them, *that is*, by those who had the utmost Assurance of them that Human Nature is capable of. And not only a bare Resistance of that Evidence, but with a very malicious Circumstance, so as to impute those Works which were wrought by the Holy Ghost to the Power of the Devil. This was the Case of the *Pharisees* whom our Saviour chargeth with this Sin. And no Body hath Warrant to extend this Sin any further than this Case: And without good Warrant it would be the most uncharitable thing in the World to extend it any further.

That which comes nearest to it, both in the Heinousness of the Crime, and the

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Unpardonableness of it, is *total Apostasie from Christianity* after the embracing of it, and full Conviction of the Truth of it. And this the Scripture seems to place, if not in the same Rank, yet very near to it. And of this the Apostle speaks very often in the *Epistle* to the *Hebrews* under the Name of *Unbelief*, and *Sin* by way of Eminence, as being the great *Sin* that Christians were in Danger of falling into, called in that *Epistle* (*H. b. 12. 1.*) *ἡ ὑποστάσις τῆς ἁμαρτίας*, the *Sin* which Christians, by reason of the *Circumstances* they were then in were especially subject to: And he parallels it with the Case of the *Jews* in the *Wilderness*, concerning whom God *swore* that they should not enter into his *Rest*, namely, the *Earthly Canaan* which was a *Type* of *Heaven*, Chap. 3. ver. 18. And Chap. 6. ver. 4. 5, 6. *For it is impossible that those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the Heavenly Gift, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, if they should fall away, to renew them again to Repentance.* Where by impossible, the least that can be meant, is, that it is extremely difficult for such Persons to recover themselves by Repentance. And 'tis observable, that those Persons are said to have been *Partakers of the Holy Ghost*, by which is meant that they were endued with a *Power of Miracles* by the *Holy Ghost*, or were under the

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the Conviction of them as having seen them wrought by others. So that this Apostasy may be said in that respect to be a *Sin against the Holy Ghost*. So likewise, *Chap. 10. ver. 26. If we sin wilfully after we have received the Knowledge of the Truth* (that is, if we apostatize from Christianity after we have embraced the Profession of it, as appears plainly from the Scope of the Apostle's Discourse) *there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin*: Which Expression declares this Sin either to be unpardonable, or something very like it. And at the 29 ver. those Persons are said to tread under Foot the Son of God, and to do despite unto the Spirit of Grace. Which signifies that the Sin there spoken of is more immediately committed against the Holy Spirit of God. St. Peter likewise declares the great Danger of this Sin, *2 Pet. 2. 20. If after they have escaped the Pollutions of the World through the Knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.* St. John likewise seems to speak of this Sin of Apostacy, and to call it a *Sin unto Death*: Discouraging Christians rather from praying for those who were fallen into it; which gives great Suspicion that he looked upon it as hardly pardonable, *1 Joh. 5. 16. If any Man see his Brother sin a Sin not unto Death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for those that*

fin not unto Death. There is a Sin unto Death, I do not say that he shall pray for it. Now that by the Sin unto Death the Apostle here means Apostasie from the Christian Religion to the Heathen Idolatry seems extremely probable from what follows, ver. 18. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but keepeth himself, and that wicked one seduceth him not; that is, he preserveth himself from Idolatry which the Devil had seduced the World into, ver. 19. And we know that we are of God, and the whole World lieth in Wickedness, &c. &c. in the wicked one; that is, is under the Power of the Devil; And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us Understanding to know him that is true; that is, to distinguish between the true God and Idols. And then it follows, this is the True God, and Eternal Life: Little Children, keep your selves from Idols. Which last Caution is a Key to the Understanding of all the rest, and makes it very probable that the Sin unto Death is Apostasie from Christianity unto Idolatry: Otherwise it is hard to imagine how the last Clause comes in, Little Children keep you selves from Idols. And this is that Sin which of all other approacheth nearest to this Sin against the Holy Ghost which our Saviour speaks of, and concerning the Pardonableness of which the Scripture seems to speak very doubtfully. But if it were of the same unpardonable Nature, yet this can be no trouble

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ble to those Persons I am now speaking of, who cannot but very well know themselves to be far enough from the Guilt of this Sin.

As for those other Sins which by some are taken to be the Sins against the Holy Ghost, they are either such as perhaps no Man is capable of committing, as a *malicious Opposition to the Truth when I am convinced, and know it to be the Truth* : For this seems to be a Contradiction, to know any thing to be the Truth, and to believe it to be so, and yet to oppose it; because the Understanding can no more oppose Truth as Truth, than the Will can refuse Good as Good. Or else, they are such as no Man can know he is guilty of in this Life; as, *final Impenitency*. which supposeth a Man to live and die without Repentance. Or else, such as I think no good Man is incident to; as, *a malicious and perverse opposing of the TRUTH after sufficient Means of Conviction*. However, none of these are that which the SCRIPTURE describes to be the Sin against the HOLY GHOST, as I have already shewn.

But still there are two things which usually trouble honest and well-meaning Persons, but are rather the Effects of Melancholly than any reasonable Ground of Trouble. Some think that every *deliberate Sin against Knowledge, and after Conviction, is* the

the Sin against the Holy Ghost. This is acknowledged to be a very great Aggravation of Sin, and such as calls for a great and particular Repentance ; but does by no means render a Man incapable of Forgiveness. Others are troubled with *Blasphemous Thoughts*, and those they think to be *the Sin against the Holy Ghost*. But this is generally the meer Effects of Melancholly, and the Persons that are troubled with these black Thoughts are no ways consenting to them, but they rise in their Minds perfectly against their Wills, and without any Approbation of theirs : And in this Case they are so far from being the unpardonable Sin, that I hope, yea and verily believe, they are no Sins at all, but the meer Effects of a Bodily Distemper ; and no more imputed to us than the wild and idle Ravings of a Man in a Frenzy or a Fever : And God forbid that the Natural Effects of a Bodily Disease should bring Guilt upon our Souls. So that these Persons have reason enough for Comfort ; but the Misery is, their present Distemper renders them incapable of it.

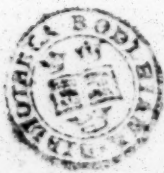
2. *Secondly*, The other use I would make of this Discourse is, to caution Men against the *degrees and approaches* of this Sin. For if the Sin against the Holy Ghost be of such a high Nature, and so unpardonable, then all Approaches to it are very dreadful. Such as are, *Prophane Scoffing at Religion and the Holy Spirit*.

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Spirit of God which dwells in good Men : Abuse of the Holy Scriptures, which were indited by the Spirit of God : Perverse Infidelity, notwithstanding all the Evidence which we have for the Truth of Christianity, and sufficient Assurance of the Miracles wrought for the Confirmation of it brought down to us by credible History, tho' we were not Eye-Witnesses of them : Obstinacy in a sinful and vicious Course, notwithstanding all the Motives and Arguments of the Gospel to persuade Men to Repentance. Sinning against the clear Conviction of our Consciences, and the Motions and Suggestions of God's Holy Spirit to the contrary. Malicious opposing of the Truth when the Arguments for it are very plain and evident to any impartial and unprejudiced Mind, and when he that opposeth the Truth hath no clear Satisfaction in his own Mind to the contrary, but suffers himself to be furiously and headily carried on in his opposition to it. These are all Sins of a very high Nature, and of the nearest Affinity with this great and unpardonable Sin, of any that can easily be instanced in. And though God, to encourage the Repentance of Men, have not declared them unpardonable, yet they are great Provocations; and if they be long continued in, we know not how soon God may withdraw his Grace from us, and suffer us to be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin.

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Be ready then to entertain the Truth of God whenever it is fairly propounded to thee, and with such Evidence as thou art willing to accept in other Matters where thou hast no Prejudice nor Interest to the contrary. Do nothing contrary to thy known Duty, but be careful in all things to obey the Convictions of thine own Conscience, and to yield to the good Motions and Suggestions of God's *Holy Spirit*, who works secretly upon the Minds of Men, and inspires us many times gently with good Thoughts and Inclinations, and is griev'd when we do not comply with them; and after many Repulses will at last withdraw himself from us, and leave us to be assaulted by the Temptations of the Devil, and to be hurried away by our own Lusts into Ruin and Perdition.



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